

September 11, 2009: Hampton Roads Lawmakers Work Together to Support Langley Air Force Base

Hampton, VA - Three Hampton Roads members of Congress are teaming up to make the case that Langley Air Force Base would make an ideal home for an additional squadron of F-22s, as well as a future base for F-35s and other emerging Air Force missions.

In a letter to Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley, Congressmen Glenn Nye, Rob Wittman, and Bobby Scott urge the Air Force to take advantage of the "unique capabilities that are currently based at LAFB," and to ensure that "those assets are fully utilized."

The bipartisan letter notes the recent decline in economic impact from Langley, calling it a "troubling trend" that is directly linked to personnel and force structure reductions in recent years.

The letter continues: "While our concerns about the economic impact of such changes on the region are significant, we recognize and appreciate that both the Air Force and the Department of Defense are faced with enormous challenges in the current budgetary environment. However, we also believe that LAFB and the personnel stationed there represent uniquely capable assets... and should be more fully utilized."

Congressman Glenn Nye, who serves on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said: "Langley Air Force Base is not only an important part of our community in Hampton Roads, but it is also a key strategic asset to our national security. It makes sense for Langley to be the home base for additional F-22s, and when the F-35 comes online, Langley should be a top candidate for one or more squadrons. This is not a partisan issue, and I will continue working closely with the entire Hampton Roads delegation to advocate for Langley Air Force Base."

Congressman Rob Wittman, who serves on the House Armed Services Committee and is the Ranking Member on the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, said: "Langley Air Force Base has great potential to take on additional emerging joint and primary missions with its unique capabilities and strategic mission. I am pleased that we are able to have a continuing dialogue with the Secretary of the Air Force and this letter serves as follow up to our last meeting regarding force structure adjustments and the potential economic impact to Langley Air Force Base and the Hampton Roads region."

Congressman Scott said: "Ensuring that Langley maintains a robust force structure is not only vital to Hampton Roads but to the strategic goals of the Air Force. On issues of vital importance to our region, the Hampton Roads delegation has a long history of working together. I look forward to working with Congressman Nye and Congressman Wittman on this important issue."

The full text of the letter from Congressmen Nye, Wittman and Scott is attached below, and can be found online at http://nye.house.gov/uploads/091109_Langley_Letter.pdf

September 11, 2009

The Honorable Michael B. Donley

Secretary of the Air Force

1670 Air Force

The Pentagon

Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Donley,

Earlier this summer, Langley Air Force Base (LAFB) officials released an analysis of the economic impact of the base in the Hampton Roads community. Although the study indicates that LAFB contributes \$1.2 billion to the local economy, this total is 25 percent less than the last reported impact of \$1.6 billion in 2005. Needless to say, this is a troubling trend that is directly linked to a number of personnel and force structure reductions that have occurred at LAFB over the past several years. On behalf of our constituents who live and work on and around Langley, we write to request your assistance in addressing a number of our concerns about the current and future role of the base.

It is our understanding that the reduction in economic impact of LAFB is largely connected to reductions in the number of jobs at the base. Not only did the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round have personnel impacts, but in 2006, the Program Budget Decision (PBD) 720 eliminated 630 jobs at the installation, and in 2008, the AEF Center moved to Texas taking 250 jobs with it. We are also aware that upcoming changes will have additional consequences on LAFB's personnel, including force structure adjustments in FY10 that will close the F-15 squadron at LAFB and cut an additional 399 military jobs, as well as 2012 staff reductions of approximately 360 jobs to establish Global Strike Command.

While our concerns about the economic impact of such changes on the region are significant, we recognize and appreciate that both the Air Force and the Department of Defense are faced with enormous challenges in the current budgetary environment. However, we also believe that LAFB and the personnel stationed there represent uniquely capable assets to the Air Force, the Department of Defense, and the nation, and that those assets can and should be more fully utilized.

First, we ask that you consider the benefits that would result from basing an additional squadron of F-22s at LAFB. During the 2005 BRAC round, LAFB was ranked as one of the two best Air Force installations in the Fighter Mission Compatibility Indices (MCI). Although LAFB currently hosts two squadrons of F-22 Raptors, the installation has specific capacity for an additional squadron of Raptors, particularly after the F-15 squadron is decommissioned. While we recognize that the Department of Defense intends to procure only 187 F-22s, basing an additional squadron of F-22s at LAFB could provide significant benefits to the Air Force. Not only would additional aircraft at LAFB provide the associated Air National Guard unit with additional platforms with which to carry out the east coast air sovereignty mission, but increasing the number of squadrons at LAFB could result in efficiencies in maintenance and operations of the overall F-22 fleet. We hope you will take this into consideration as the Air Force works through force structure adjustments in the coming months.

Additionally, although we recognize that the F-35 Lightning II is still a few years from becoming a widespread Air Force asset, we hope that you will recognize that LAFB's range access and MCI ranking make the installation a good candidate for F-35 basing as well. LAFB's close proximity to ranges at Patuxent River and in the Virginia Capes offshore area provide nearly unparalleled training opportunities for units based at the installation. We also note that future basing of Navy F-35s at Naval Air Station Oceana and aircraft depot maintenance activities at NAS Oceana may provide an opportunity to realize additional joint efficiencies for F-35s at LAFB. In light of these benefits, as well as those of encouraging joint F-22/F-35 training and maintenance activities through co-location, we urge you to consider LAFB for combined F-22/F-35 basing at the appropriate time.

Finally, we urge you to consider LAFB for the beddown of other emerging Air Force missions, such as irregular warfare squadrons, cyber-operations and training, unmanned systems, Project Liberty and other Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance aircraft, and research and development activities that could leverage the co-located assets of NASA Langley Research Center. We believe that various existing activities at Langley Air Force Base provide solid foundations for the successful beddown of any of these missions at the installation.

For example, LAFB currently hosts the Global Cyberspace Integration Center (GCIC), a function that could provide significant support and leverage to cyber-operations units and integration efforts between air and cyberspace platforms. Similarly, ongoing activities at LAFB to analyze imagery could be leveraged to develop an imagery analysis "schoolhouse," an action that could rapidly reduce existing shortfalls of qualified analysts. Emerging regional activities associated with unmanned systems of all types provides additional synergy and may be complementary to the recently released Air Force Flight Plan.

We hope that you appreciate that we are aggressive advocates of the unique capabilities that are currently based at LAFB, and our interests are that those assets are fully utilized. We look forward to your response, and to working with you in the future to ensure that - as you once wrote to USAF personnel around the world - "the Air Force will continue to provide world's finest air, space and cyber power."

Respectfully yours,

Glenn Nye

Member of Congress

Bobby Scott

Member of Congress

Robert Wittman

Member of Congress